

## Healthy mental development in the first five years



### Healthy Mental Development in Early Childhood

1. Early childhood impacts later success

A child's brain will grow the most during the first 5 years of life, reaching 90 percent of its final size. Children's brain architecture is heavily influenced by their early emotional development.

2. Children's social and emotional health is essential to school readiness, academic success, and overall well-being.

When young children do not achieve the milestones linked to healthy mental development, they are at risk to do poorly in the early school years, putting them at increased risk for school failure, juvenile delinquency, adult mental health concerns and other problems.

3. All children are not school ready

While 15-18% of school-aged children have a developmental or behavioral disability, only 7% are identified prior to starting school. Therefore, a majority of children who should be referred to services are not getting referred.

4. Why primary care providers are key

In Iowa, over 90% of children ages birth to 5 are seen by a primary care provider, giving providers the unique opportunity to play an important role in early identification and treatment for children's development.

5. Closing the gap between medical providers & community-based services

- Iowa's **1<sup>st</sup> Five** Healthy Mental Development Initiative bridges systems of care between primary care and public health services to improve early detection among young children ages birth-5.
- Services such as **1<sup>st</sup> Five** that support young children's healthy mental development can reduce the prevalence of developmental and behavioral disorders which have high costs and long-term consequences for health, education, child welfare, and juvenile justice system.

### Legislative Considerations:

1. Continue to fund **1<sup>st</sup> Five** as a carve-out program within the Iowa Department of Public Health budget.
2. Place 1 FTE within IDPH as the **1<sup>st</sup> Five** state coordinator.